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AUTHOR Wasley, Patricia A.; McElliott, Karen S.
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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the rationale, the processes and the outcomes of a teacher-based research project which was undertaken during 1987-88. In the course of the project, university faculty and local school district teachers came together to work, forming two kinds of collegial relationships--teachers working with their fellow teachers and university faculty working with teachers. The project described was established to define teacher leadership as it currently exists in schools from teachers' perspectives. During the course of the study, the group developed and conducted a survey of teachers whom they considered to be leaders within their districts. The purpose of the survey was to determine how teachers define teacher leadership. The teachers involved in the analysis of the data and in the writing of the report determined that the findings held implications for the teachers themselves, for school administrators, and also for university faculty. These implications were formulated as recommendations on the roles and responsibilities of each group. The first half of the report describes the history of the project, summarizes the findings from the research, and describes the university's role in the project. The second half of the report discusses the benefits and problems of participation in such a venture from a teacher's perspective. (JD)

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BECOMING COLLEAGUES: TEACHERS AS RESEARCHERS

Paper prepared for the 1989 AERA Conference

in San Francisco

by Patricia A. Wasley and Karen S. McElliott

Puget Sound Educational Consortium

University of Washington

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The purpose of this paper is to describe the rationale, the processes and the outcomes of a teacher-based research project which was undertaken during 1987-88. In the course of the project, university faculty and local school district teachers came together to work; thus we had two kinds of colleagueship occurring simultaneously--teachers working with their fellow teachers, and university faculty working with teachers. Our hope is that a record of these simultaneous collaborations will help to document a little of what happens when teachers and university faculty work together in the process of becoming colleagues.

The first half of this paper is written by Pat Wasley, the University of Washington coordinator of the group, a research assistant and graduate student during the course of this project. The first half of the paper will describe the history--how the project was established and conducted. It will summarize the findings from the actual research which the teachers conducted, and it will describe the university's role in facilitating this project.

The second half of the paper is written by Karen McElliott, a middle school teacher in the Edmonds School District, north of Seattle. Karen was a participant in the development of this project and functioned as the final editor for the research report. The second half of the paper will discuss the tensions and dilemmas involved in undertaking new responsibilities from a teacher's perspective. In addition, Karen will discuss the benefits and the problems of participation in such a venture.

The project which we wish to describe was established to define teacher leadership as it currently exists in schools from teachers' perspectives. Before I describe the rationale for the project, let me go back and set the stage by describing the national

reform context and collaboration out of which this project emerged. Three years ago, two major reports, Tomorrow's Teachers (the Holmes Group, 1986) and Teachers for the 21st Century (Carnegie, 1986) were released, both of which called for a greater variety of roles for teachers. These reports brought the discussion of teacher professionalism and the need for more leadership opportunities to the forefront of the national discussion.

The discussion of heightened professionalism emerged from a number of concerns. A major teacher shortage had been predicted, a result of the greying of the American teaching forces and the civil rights movement which had made other occupational opportunities possible for large numbers of minorities and women who would previously have chosen teaching. (Darling-Hammond, 1984) The reform efforts of the previous decade were proving more problematic than helpful. The road to improvement had been paved in more control measures from state departments across the country, rendering teachers ever more unable to deal with the increasing diversity in their student population. (Wise, 1979; McCloskey, et.al., 1987) The norms of practice had not changed much over the last hundred years, and students faced hours of disjointed curriculum, isolated factual lectures, and meaningless exercise disconnected from their real world experience. (Boyer, 1983; Goodlad, 1984; Sizer, 1984) Working conditions in teaching--isolation, inadequate resources, overburdened curriculum--made it nearly impossible for teachers to change their own practice. (Lieberman & Miller, 1984) The absence of teacher voices in the reform efforts which discussed these concerns was more and more glaringly apparent. (Lieberman, 1986)

In the midst of this reform context, the Puget Sound Educational Consortium was formed--the third of the fourteen school university partnerships in John Goodlad's

National Network for School Renewal. Fourteen school districts joined in a partnership with the University of Washington to work on the intransigent issues which have long plagued public education--things like the provision of equity and excellence for all students, the improvement of professional practice and professional training for teachers and administrators, and the appropriate application of technology.

In 1986, Ann Lieberman came to the university as the executive director of the Consortium and helped to establish the initial thrusts of activity. While a leadership seminar was in place for superintendents and a leadership academy in place for principals, little planning had been done to involve teachers. Ann immediately organized the Teacher Leadership Strand, committed part of the Consortium budget and secured a grant from a local foundation to provide the teachers with a working budget.

FORMING A GROUP

In order to find a way to engage teachers in a discussion of these issues, a strand of activity was formed within the Puget Sound Educational Consortium in order for teachers to explore issues related to teacher leadership. The term teacher leadership was not casually chosen. We were in hopes that teachers who were recognized as leaders themselves would come together to struggle with the meanings of and the implications of teacher leadership. Because Washington is an NEA state, a meeting with the president of the union took place early in the groundwork of the project. The association was more than supportive of the formation of such a group and was instrumental in helping to secure funding. A grant, generously given by the Medina Foundation, provided the wherewithal for teachers to come together, to meet and to work.

After checking with superintendents, each district was asked to develop a process to select seven teachers who would represent the leaders amongst the teachers in their districts. The number seven was selected because it seemed to be large enough to encourage a range of teachers with different interests and backgrounds but small enough so that the total--98--was manageable should the group wish to participate in an institute during the summer, in evening dinners, in day-long workshops.

As a means by which to begin to work together, these seven teachers would participate in a week-long institute during the summer to investigate teacher leadership. The focus of the seminar was described rather vaguely as the teachers would actually form the agenda once they had begun to meet. Thus, the seminar was planned to familiarize teachers with the issues. To do this we brought in researchers and policy makers who had been working with the issues related to teacher leadership--people who had national reputations. The rest of the time during the seminar was to be devoted to teacher response to these issues and to determine what they would like to do with the grant monies which had been made available.

In order to encourage participation in the seminar, college credit was made available, though getting this through the university was no easy task. Participants would pay only for the credits, as the speakers, the room arrangements and meals would be covered by the grant. While we feared that many of the very experienced teachers we hoped to attract would not be compelled by credit collecting, we continued to hope that the opportunity to collaborate with other top-notch teachers would help. Furthermore, we made it clear that there was money available which would be at their disposal. In addition, we hoped that the opportunity to work with national experts would prove

interesting. Given this background, each of the districts set about finding willing leaders from amongst the teaching ranks.

This was a particularly difficult time as almost no one was comfortable with the high level of ambiguity which was necessary if we were to honestly form a project which reflected teacher leadership. Because we did not know what the group would decide to do, it was difficult to predict the time commitment which would result from participation, nor could we indicate which kind of skills would be needed, nor could we describe the benefits of participation. In addition, we felt that we could not clarify whether teacher leaders were the people on teaching contracts but were released to do such things as curriculum development or staff development, or whether they were exemplary teachers who were still in the classroom, or whether they were the people who held association positions. The frustration which the school people experienced in the face of this ambiguity was palpable.

As a result, a certain degree of distrust of the university emerged at this point. Teachers and administrators alike were quick to remind us that collaborations with the university usually served university faculty far more than they did school personnel. Those of us who represented the university acknowledged these concerns by reiterating that we did not have a hidden agenda, that the teachers themselves would determine the nature and the form of their work and, therefore, could ensure that what they chose to do supported their own concerns. The only stipulation was that we wished to explore issues related to teacher leadership.

Because district autonomy was important, each district developed its own process, and each was slightly different than the others. Some districts turned the responsibility

for selection over to the teachers' association. Other teams of teachers were selected by administrative teams while still others were formed by collaborations between the teachers association and the district administration. In two districts, teachers were invited to apply for the seven available slots, and selection was done by a team comprised of central office people, building administrators and teachers selected by the local association. Later, the selection process was to surface as very important; to a large degree, it determined the attitudes which the teachers brought with them to the project.

At this point it is worth noting that project staff began to feel a bit nervous about the likelihood that anyone would be willing to participate in this project at all. It was clear that few of the school people were familiar with the national experts who had been invited to speak on the issues related to teacher leadership, so the opportunity to work with these people was not the motivator that we had hoped. It was also evident that without some clearly defined set of objectives, everyone was skeptical about the value of this experience. We practiced the typical university response to ambiguity: we called another meeting. This time we assembled all of the local association presidents with the help of the state president, Terry Bergeson. At this meeting, a good deal of animosity surfaced as the local presidents became aware that each of their districts had agreed to pay a substantial amount of money--upwards of $17,000 per district--to participate in the Consortium. While the anger expressed was not universal in the group, it was understandable. During this period, the unions were having less success in raising salaries or in reducing class size while the superintendents were able to join with their colleagues to work with the university on issues about which the teachers had not been

consulted. At the end of the meeting, we felt a bit like missionaries who were collecting the firewood for our own stew pot. Still, while some of the union presidents left with the intention of stopping all participation in the Consortium, others were interested and supportive. And it was not long before the quotas from each school district began to trickle in.

JOINING TOGETHER

The summer institute was an enormously interesting week, rich in the complexities which face teachers as they begin to think about their conceptions of teacher leadership. Project staff made a host of mistakes, and yet the week proved to be a sufficiently powerful experience for both teachers and staff to establish a research agenda and the beginnings of a group which has continued to grow in strength.

The mistakes we made are worth noting. More concerned with the product than with the process, we forgot completely about the human relations activities which would have helped the group to get to know each other, to help establish an esprit de corps. We scheduled speakers who have given AERA presentations--they read their papers about teachers to the teachers, practicing the very technique teachers were constantly being criticized for using. The teachers let us know that we provided very poor models--or good models of bad instruction.

We scheduled too much--we had breakfast speakers and then brought in local teachers who had received national or state recognition to speak at lunchtime. We cut down on the time they had to digest and to discuss the issues--so that they began to feel very rushed and frustrated.

Our worst mistake was to divide the group into two with different facilitators for each group. We did this in order to make the groups more manageable. Throughout the week, the teachers reacted like students who have been tracked or selected for a pull-out program. All of them wanted to know what had gone on in the other session, and why they had been selected for this group and not the other one. We resolved that problem finally by dissolving the two groups into one.

We provided a library of reading. We spend hundreds of dollars running huge sets of the most current reports and research on teacher leadership, on collegiality, on the improvement of practice. The teachers felt buried under paper. In addition, we provided reports which had been written for university scholars. Thus, they were often inaccessible to many of the teachers because the form and the language is so distant from their own experiences as teachers. Furthermore, we provided no time to read or to discuss the readings. A few well-chosen pieces would have been much better.

On the other hand, we did a number of things right which brought us face to face with the severe isolation in which teachers work. We found an aesthetically pleasing place to work--a large room on a lake so that when the groups divided up to do smaller group work, they could work outside on the deck amidst quacking ducks and geese. In addition, simple but good food was provided. The teachers indicated again and again how much they appreciated being treated well and how much they appreciated the opportunity to come together with a group of their colleagues. This was of major importance to them; they felt for once as if they were being treated as professionals.

One of the other good things we did was to push the confrontation of difficult issues. The beginning of the week was fraught with mistrust. The teachers

communicated that they were unwilling to be the guinea pigs for someone else's dissertation. And, they found it difficult to believe that the university did not have an agenda. Finally, they were distrustful of each other which Karen will speak to in more detail. In order to push them forward in the development of their own agenda, the institute director insisted that the participants return to the thorny issues which arose. This was an important function played by the university staff because it allowed the group to clarify their purposes in important ways before they established their working agenda. Rather than accepting a "majority rules" kind of circumstance, the university staff believed that if the group was to have any strength at all, the group must clarify what it was that they were going to stand for.

ASSEMBLING THE RESEARCH PROJECT

By the end of the institute, the group had determined that they would spend the grant money by developing and conducting a survey of teachers whom they considered to be leaders within their districts. The purpose of the survey was to determine how teachers define teacher leadership. Thus, another 85 teachers were selected and interviewed by the teacher leadership group. Committees were formed to spread the work around. One team worked with university staff to develop the instrument. Two members of that team field-tested the instrument, and the whole team reassembled to revise it. All summer institute participants conducted interviews within their own districts. In addition, a team of eight conducted cross-district interviews to determine whether there was a difference in the kinds of responses which occurred in district or out of district. No difference was noted.

Another team of eight came to the university to analyze the data. In a three-day session, responses to each question were written out. Then teams of two or three teachers generated categories from the entire group, checking their interpretations of responses with the larger group when necessary. Another team assembled to write the report. This group took the tabulated responses, generated the charts and graphs, and wrote brief narrative descriptions of the responses of each of the interview questions. Finally an editor wove the whole report into a comprehensive whole.

The report was formatted and printed at the university and distributed at a dinner meeting in the spring. The reassembled group was genuinely pleased with the product of the report and with the information it contributed to the discussion of teacher leadership.

THE FINDINGS

The findings of the survey contributed to the current knowledge base about teacher leadership in several ways:

1. The study helped us to better understand what teachers consider to be leadership kinds of responsibilities. These responsibilities range from formal roles like department heads, staff development trainers, and curriculum writers to informal roles like school improvement committee chairs, and exemplary classroom teachers, so that any kind of formulaic definition is impossible.
2. We discovered that teachers who are considered leaders by their peers have from sixteen to twenty-two years of experience, a surprising finding which may indicate how long it takes to become comfortable with the many variables of teaching or how long it takes to reach top levels of

credentialing.

3. These teacher leaders are well-educated, holding a variety of advance degrees and certifications.

4. They are reticent to call themselves leaders, claiming repeatedly that the kinds of things they do are done by any number of teachers. This finding indicates that the egalitarian ethic in teaching--that all teachers hold the same rank and status as all other teachers, are paid the same, are differentiated only by numbers of years of experience--is very strong and must be figured into the creation of new teacher leadership roles.

5. More than half of the teachers who fill leadership roles receive some kind of compensation. Thirty-eight percent received no compensation for what they did while the rest received compensation in the form of release days, extra contract days, or small stipends.

6. The teacher leaders surveyed shared several common personality traits: enthusiasm, honesty, assertiveness, flexibility, love of learning. They perceived themselves as risk-takers, team players, good listeners and good communicators. The majority of these people believed that they could make a difference in their schools as well as in their classrooms.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The teachers involved in the analysis of the data and in the writing of the report determined that the findings held implications for three groups--teachers themselves, school administrators and university faculty. The implications were formulated as recommendations. Not surprisingly, the report made the most impassioned pleas to

teachers themselves.

Recommendations for Teachers

Teachers need to:

- Look within their own teaching ranks for leadership and expertise instead of always turning to experts from the outside. Much in keeping with Lampert's argument (Kappan, May, 1988), the teachers recognized that this habit decreases the leadership opportunities which exist for them within their own districts and for which many of them long.
- Encourage risk taking and divergent thinking within teaching. The leaders interviewed were not afraid to challenge the existing system, but they were frequently alone in their hopes for change, as the rest of the teaching force is reticent to experiment.
- Recognize that teachers want and need new challenges through their careers. All of those interviewed indicated that they benefited from their leadership responsibilities--they gained understanding about children and schools; they had more opportunities to work with other teachers. If teachers are to create a learning environment for children, they should have the opportunity to learn themselves.
- Understand that with new roles comes new responsibilities and plenty of ambiguity. Those interviewed indicated that flexibility was absolutely necessary when accepting leadership and also noted that the ambiguity and uncertainty were oftentimes difficult to deal with.

Recommendations for Administrators

Administrators need to:

- Celebrate teacher diversity and capability.
- Help to build leadership roles for teachers which support and improve the current quality of classroom instruction. Many of the responsibilities were clearly administrative in nature, and did little to improve the classroom experience for teachers and students.
- Work with teachers to restructure time for teacher-to-teacher dialogues.
- Protect classroom time.
- Nurture newly emerging leaders.
- Promote leadership skills by providing time and opportunities to hone skills.
- Provide authentic decision-making roles.

Recommendations for University Faculty

University faculty need to:

- Foster educational leadership roles in teacher preparation programs in order to equip new teachers for the diverse roles which they will hold within their buildings and districts.
- Include in their advanced degrees graduate work which supports collegial growth and which fosters instructional leadership. Teachers need training in organizational diagnosis, process skills, resource utilization, work management, trust and rapport building, and

building skills and confidence in others.

* Work with districts to improve professional training so that practitioners are involved.
* Support the mentoring process.

Dilemmas of Becoming Colleagues

Participation in a project of this nature was fraught with small tensions and new dilemmas for university faculty. The process of becoming colleagues in the shared practice of research required that university faculty change their traditional stance with school people. Normally, faculty members engage with teachers in two ways. First, faculty are traditionally the teachers while teachers come to the university as their students. This traditional relationship implies that teachers come to university faculty to gain knowledge and expertise which they don't have. Thus, it is a kind of mentoring relationship which is hierarchical in nature. Secondly, university faculty traditionally have functioned as the researchers. Faculty go to schools to conduct research and then go back to the university to write about their findings. The findings are generally written for other researchers, and there is seldom a feedback loop in which teachers respond to the findings of the research. Both of these traditional relationships were challenged.

In the process of becoming colleagues, as in the project just described, these traditional relationships changed. In this case, university faculty joined with teachers on more equal footing. While university faculty knew more about research and appropriate methodologies and procedures, the teachers knew more about their own practice and about what would be helpful for them to know. Thus, university faculty has to contribute to the relationship as an equal member rather than as the more experienced teacher.

Similarly, faculty had to relinquish control of the research. Some of the questions they believed would provide the most interesting information did not interest the staff at all. The teachers actually conducted the research and wrote the report of the findings. Thus, the faculty's role changed from researcher to facilitator of the research.

Furthermore, while faculty were clear about usual research audiences, they were less sure of this audience. As a result, the group together considered how best to present the information so that it would be of interest to and utilizable by the intended audience. What was to be included in the report was again a topic of some debate. While researchers were interested in previous studies done as a means by which to establish what is known and what isn't known, teachers were more interested in their shared conclusions, and demonstrated far less faith in previous research. It was in this process that university faculty got a much clearer understanding of how teachers feel about traditional research reports. This did not always make for comfortable exchanges.

In addition, university faculty had to consider different means by which to prepare teachers to conduct research. In more traditional circumstances, a quarter or a semester methods course would have been provided in which to explore the surface complexity of a particular methodology. In this case, we had two days to prepare people to develop instruments and to revise them. We learned analysis by doing it. To complicate matters further, the participating teachers' schedules were already horrendous as they were teaching, taking classes, filling leadership responsibilities themselves, and so, the likelihood that they would read essays on how to conduct research was unlikely. As a result, a different attitude towards the methodology and the teaching of it was necessary. Participating faculty found it necessary to distill the most important criteria of both types

of research and to function as the methodological conscience of the group without squelching its enthusiasm to proceed. This was not only difficult to do, but was emotionally challenging, as both groups defended their beliefs and attitudes.

THE BENEFITS OF SHARED RESEARCH

While the entire process of collaborating on a research project of this nature provided a series of challenges, it also fostered greater understanding and expanded the possibilities for future collaboration. From the faculty/staff perspective, some important gains were made. As the research process was demystified for the teachers in the midst of their own project, they became more confident of their ability to use the techniques, and they became more convinced of the benefits of engaging in such activities. In several cases, the teachers used the methods with their own students and with staff development projects in their own buildings. This was rewarding for the university-based staff, as it gave a heightened credibility to the kind of work in which we are regularly engaged.

At the same time, the teachers gained respect for the complexity involved in conducting research and had a deeper appreciation of the kind of labor it requires. The teachers experienced the same kind of tedium which accompanies the compilation of the responses. Then, they experienced the excitement when categories seem to leap out of the data--key puzzle pieces to understanding what all of the information meant.

University staff learned more about the complexity of teaching and about teacher leadership because of the necessary interaction with larger numbers of teachers. We actually interacted with twice as many teachers as we might have, had we conducted the research ourselves. We were also forced to hear teachers' reactions to traditional

research in a more honest way and had the opportunity to defend such work. Certainly we learned a great deal about providing research findings in a way that was appropriate for teachers.

Through all of these instances, the often noted gap between theory and practice was, in a small way, bridged. Schools, the work of teachers and an understanding of the leadership contribution they make to schools became clearer to university staff while the traditional work of university faculty became clearer to teachers. Through the process of collaboration and mutual problem solving, the burden of learning was shared, and the distances between institutions reduced.

A TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE

The first half of this paper focused on the history of and research generated by PSEC's teacher leaders, and it discussed the dilemmas and complexities of the group and its project from the viewpoint of the university. The remainder of the paper will concentrate on one teacher's perspective of that group and its work, especially on the underlying tensions and issues, the benefits and hazards of participation. The majority of this section will concentrate on the 1987 summer seminar since it served as a crucible for everything we brought to it. We came to the seminar with a wealth of unrefined and unarticulated beliefs and theories about teachers' roles. By the end of those five days of crucial discussion our ideas had been tested, tempered, and distilled.

TENSIONS AND DILEMMAS

The seminar presented teachers with their first exposure to the consortium and to the issues surrounding teacher leadership. Teachers came with, at best, a hazy understanding of the consortium, its various strands, their district's commitment to both,

and the reason for their being there. Consequently the week began as a true Tower of Babel. Each teacher came with a unique mental picture of teacher leadership. Each disparate image was based on personal perceptions of leadership roles, individual district's historic treatment of teachers, one's own formal and informal teacher assignments, and the district's method of determining participation in the Teacher Leadership Strand. Union reps spoke one language, specialists another, classroom teachers a third. Urban teachers spoke differently from those from the suburbs. Language barriers led to distrust. The classroom teachers did not consider themselves to be leaders; after all they were just doing their jobs. On the other hand, some were skeptical that teachers who didn't teach children could be teacher leaders; they weren't, after all, teaching. Some were more than skeptical and flatly stated that such people weren't teachers at all, but quasi-administrators and, therefore, illegitimate members of the group.

This was the first time Puget Sound teachers had been given an interdistrict forum in which to express their views on leadership. In fact, for many this was their first such conversation. Because of the newness of the subject, they lacked the common vocabulary and common reference points so necessary in meaningful dialogue. To further complicate the situation, there had been no agreement among the thirteen school districts on the criteria for teacher leaders, so each district had emphasized different responsibilities in its selection process. The participants, therefore, did not fit neatly into one category but included inservice specialists, teacher support assistants, team leaders, and department chairs. In the beginning, they grappled with the definitions and connotations of educational terminology. Were they lead teachers, teacher leaders,

career teachers, or change agents? Didn't these distinctions smack of elitism in a profession which prides itself on its egalitarianism? Leader implies follower. Furthermore, they wondered who should decide who deserves to lead and who is only qualified to follow.

There was also a great difference of opinion about how leadership should be fostered and managed. Some believed lead teachers must spend a portion of their time in the classroom while others did not believe that daily classroom contact was necessary. Some vehemently stated that teacher leaders should not be given released time at the expense of inflated student loads for those remaining in the classroom while others felt that released time was not an issue. Some believed leadership on committees was significant while others felt true leadership would occur only when teachers were in charge of their own profession.

They expressed frustration in attempting to make statements about leadership issues when they possessed no decision-making authority to act on these recommendations. Historically, school boards, state legislature, and the federal government had taken proprietary stances toward teachers. In some districts, teachers made no decisions about anything which affected their teaching life. It seemed futile to them to be making recommendations since the only ones likely to attend to those recommendations would be other powerless teachers.

Tensions were also caused by an atmosphere of skepticism and suspicion. Although some participants saw the seminar as an historic ground breaking in which they, as representatives of all teachers, could begin to counterbalance the previous waves of reform which had imposed roles on teachers, others saw it as a burden. They viewed

the seminar as one more district imposition, one more add-on program that education had chosen for its own whimsical version of Andy Warhol's 15 minutes of fame. They feared this was one more example of education's fetish for fads: in order to fund a new program, a district robs existing programs, and then just as the new program gains momentum, it is cut in order to fund the new panacea; however, teachers are still expected to continue all activities and responsibilities on a fraction of the original budget. Many worried that since education's bottom line is dollars, not students, Teacher Leadership was destined to suffer this inevitable fate. They were hesitant to expend an emotional attachment to any new program, especially one that appeared to be topical and glitzy.

The participants were also suspicious of the university's intentions and good will. They found it difficult to believe that the university did not have its own agenda. Teachers were tired of being invited to join groups seeking solutions only to be told as soon as the introductions had been made what those solutions were. They did not propose to join another such organization. Some stridently announced their unwillingness to provide data for someone else's dissertation. It was clear that they could only picture a relationship with the university that was parasitic in nature and obviously felt that they could gain nothing through such collaboration.

The organization of the original seminar also caused tensions. Its purpose was to create a time and place for teachers to talk to one another. In the process of talking, it was hoped that they would develop their own definitions of teacher leadership roles and their own process for affecting change and nurturing growth. In order to provide the time needed to achieve those goals, the seminar had a rather freeflowing structure.

Many were uncomfortable with its ambiguity; they wanted direction, but since the institute director's intention was to allow teachers to reach their own decisions instead of organizing one more instance in which decisions were imposed on them, this direction was denied them. Instead, the decisions reached through an arduous process of active participation and consensus building were their own. Few were comfortable with the process of reaching consensus. They were accustomed to decision-making models in which they either bargained from positions of weakness, gave input to the decision maker(s) without retaining any voting power, or reached decisions by a simple majority. Although a simple majority decision would have accelerated the process, it was a false luxury not allowed the group. It would have promoted superficial and simplistic solutions and ultimately violated the very precept at the foundation of the Teacher Leadership Strand, which was to treat teachers in the same manner as others forecasting the future of education.

The major tension which surfaced, however, seemed to be between those teachers who held leadership positions in their associations and those who held other kinds of roles. The union people kept returning the conversation to class size and salary issues, stating that teacher leadership could not be recognized until those conditions were in place for all teachers. Other teachers who were experimenting with different kinds of instruction or who were working in integrative teams or who wanted more freedom to try these things, did not want to talk about teacher salaries and class size. They were anxious to get on with the conversation, to see what kinds of possibilities might emerge. It was in the midst of this building tension that it became apparent that most teachers had never had the opportunity to come together to talk about their conceptions of the

teaching career or of exceptional practice. As a result, they were unfamiliar with the stages or the processes involved in such exchanges. Previous experiences with their colleagues in faculty meetings had led them to believe that there is no fruitful resolution to these kinds of differences. In this case, the institute director would not let the participants splinter off but kept forcing the conversation so that eventually the majority who were interested in pursuing the topic of teacher leadership let their position and their numbers be known. Eventually their sheer numbers effectively silenced the other group.

ISSUES

Daily blocks of seminar time were spent exploring issues related to teacher leadership. Discussions centered around concerns about the future of the teaching profession: the loss of competent teachers who switch to other careers; the failures of teaching to attract quality college students; the effect that recommended changes in teacher education and certification will have on novice teachers; the need for teaching to be more equal in status to the other professions by increased decision-making opportunities, heightened status, and improved salaries.

It was impossible for any simple answers to emerge from these discussions; however, there was agreement that every teacher should be afforded the opportunity to develop leadership skills and to assume leadership roles, but that those roles should not interfere with the continued classroom involvement of teacher leaders. The education of young people remains the highest priority of teachers. Teachers were apprehensive about the negative impact of the term, teacher leader. Such elitism would unintentionally alienate peers. Therefore, they stressed that all teachers be viewed as

unintentionally alienate peers. Therefore, they stressed that all teachers be viewed as potential leaders. Likewise, they emphasized that teacher leadership is not intended as interim training for those intending to leave the classroom for administrative positions.

These spirited discussions culminated in prioritizing nineteen concepts of teacher leadership ranging from the need to restructure schools in order to improve the satisfaction of students and teachers to the call for innovations which would provide teachers with risk-taking opportunities. Great care was taken in distilling the essence of the discussions and the concept-ranking results into a declaration of teacher leadership, and they also formed the basis for the research project.

THE BENEFITS AND PROBLEMS OF PARTICIPATION

Collegiality

The struggle for a common language has linked the Consortium's teacher leaders. The collegiality is apparent when they meet. They have gone beyond the superficial cocktail talk of one-upmanship, a game which perpetuated interdistrict competition. Their conversations go beyond casual show and tell to deepening discussions of continuing projects and mutual issues of concern. Unfortunately, those who have joined the strand since that first summer do not have the advantage of a verbal shorthand in which the speakers share a common background of experience and a common set of educational definitions. Newcomers still speak haltingly, trying to work out those terms and issues that the original group forged together. The strand has not yet addressed the challenge of orienting new members; however, it is clear that merely reading the report is not adequate.

Reduced Isolation

Participants now accept one another as colleagues. This new view of each other has facilitated informal breaking out of both their classroom and district isolation. Discussions about teaching skills and instructional strategies have led to informal interest groups on teaming, cooperative group learning, and the like. They assert, in increasingly loud voices, that learning from peers is frequently more powerful than learning from the experts; peers are simply unrecognized experts. Teachers have yet to work out the dilemma of being a prophet in one's own school and district. Their feeling is that teacher leaders must be recognized at home if teacher leadership is to become a reality; however, the group also knows that too many administrators and co-teachers for a variety of reasons--equity, jealousy, drawing power of national speakers--are either reluctant to or obstinately opposed to recognize the leadership qualities of their colleagues.

Pride in New Abilities

When the finished report, Teacher Leadership: Commitment and Challenge, was presented to the group, they were initially stunned. This was not some report of dubious authorship about some hypothetical teachers in some other school system. This was theirs! They had done it themselves! The sense of pride was overwhelming and contagious. It was a tangible sign of what teachers can accomplish, that teachers do have a voice, that they can make valuable contributions to the body of research. Teachers proudly took copies back to their districts and buildings to share with their co-workers and, like so many researchers, were disappointed and frustrated that their staffs were not as appreciative of the paper's significance nor as moved to act on its implications as its authors had hoped.

It is rare that teachers are afforded an opportunity to participate in all the steps in collaborative research. Active involvement in the interviews and the physical nature of the report helped demystify a process that teachers have been allowed to regard for years as being too ethereal and scholarly for their ken.

Personal Gains

It is easy to speak of the benefits of belonging to the strand in terms of its widening circles of colleagues or reducing the sense of isolation or being proud of what teachers can accomplish. However, what I believe is a unique benefit of the Teacher Leadership Strand of the PESC is its implicit belief in teacher leadership. Ann Lieberman and Pat Wasley have given us a degree of implicit trust that it is mind-boggling and even a little scary. It is total trust, trust that we are and will function as leaders. It was freely given to us that first day in June two summers ago. Some of us did not want it, but that made no difference; it was ours to live up to. We did not have to qualify for it through seniority or wearing old school ties or being squeaky wheels. It was just ours.

When I volunteered to be a writer for the original report, no one asked for a sample of my writing, a college transcript, or a resume of my qualifications. I was appointed editor with my writing unseen. I was flattered that they thought I was capable, and I appreciated being allowed to revise until I felt satisfied. The aspect of the editing that bothered me the most, however, was changing what the other teachers had written in their sections. But, for the most part, I really viewed the report in the same light as writing a college term paper: once it was typed up, the prof would write notes on it, telling us what we should have said or what we really meant to say; we might discuss it,

and then it would molder in the back of a drawer with the rest of the keepsakes. It was only after I saw the report, printed as we had written it, and realized its audience was not limited to just ourselves but kept expanding outward like concentric circles that I was struck by the level of trust which seemed to be so casually given. Teachers are not used to being given anything casually. Perhaps that is why I did not realize initially what a great gift they were offering us: the proof that contrary to traditional myth "Those who teach, do." Quite simply, we are valued for our leadership capabilities.

Expanding Focus

Since the completion of that single original project, the group has fairly exploded with new work. Teachers continue to give their precious time and to add to their burgeoning list of responsibilities in order to participate in the Teacher Leadership Strand. They receive no tangible rewards for their involvement in the Consortium, but they do receive an increasing sense of empowerment, the belief that they can impact the direction of educational trends.

CURRENT PLANS

The group has continued to grow in self-direction and interest areas. The agenda for the second summer was decided by the teachers themselves and designed by teachers. In addition, they also facilitated much of the two-day session. From the original single project of the survey on the current state of teacher leadership in the Puget Sound in which Medina members took part, the group is now pursuing multiple projects in which most members are actively involved:

1) COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE: The purpose of this committee is to establish an efficient interdistrict network for disseminating information about

teacher leadership, including the production of a video tape, which will explain the Puget Sound Educational Consortium to area faculties and administrative teams;

2) LEADERSHIP SKILL BUILDING COMMITTEE: This group's task is to organize sessions to build leadership skills in teachers including a scheduled workshop addressing conflict resolution in the midst of change;

3) EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION GRANTS: These were provided by the Foxfire Project for five classroom teachers in which mandatory student learning objectives are transformed into student-driven projects with community foci;

4) ACTION RESEARCH: Five teacher groups are pursuing research in areas of instructional strategies, mandated leadership roles, teacher collegiality, and the change process;

5) TEACHER LEADERSHIP RESEARCH: This group is continuing the investigation begun in our first report through team-conducted portraits of four area schools in an effort to define shared leadership which will hopefully present a variety of shared leadership models.

The strand will publish an end-of-the-year report which will include the results of the action research groups' work, the research report on shared leadership, and descriptions of the Foxfire curriculum projects.

RESULTS OF OUR NEW COLLEAGUESHIP

Teacher leadership activities are no longer limited to those initiated by the strand. At least one Puget Sound school district has created positions which are designated as teacher leader positions. Another district has invited the Teacher Leadership Strand to

research teacher perceptions of its allocation of money for building-based leadership roles. In the past, this study, if conducted at all, would have been farmed out to central office staff or a graduate student. In four Puget Sound middle schools teacher leaders are working in conjunction with the university to establish Professional Development Centers and are beginning to make joint decisions about teacher preservice training and inservice staff development.

Caste lines between the University of Washington and district staff are beginning to blur. The exchange of ideas which was formerly viewed as the university experts pontificating to the uninformed domestics has become conversations in which both sides make significant contributions. Discussions of collaborative research between schools and the university indicate the new view of teacher as an equal in the investigative field. Most importantly the excitement that these teachers feel in being part of a group that designs valid studies of current educational practices, analyzes the resulting data, and draws conclusions for the purpose of improving learning conditions for all students is unmistakable. For the first time these teachers feel like active participants rather than passive dullards waiting to be told by non-teachers what they are doing wrong and what they should be doing to improve education. In the process of becoming colleagues, they have grown to understand their own potential to influence the changes underway in public schools.

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